



ASLEF

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APRIL 2010



8 **2012 OLYMPICS:** It's the training that counts

12 **FRANCHISING:** The union enters the game

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Railways still take a kicking

ONE of the reasons the Tories gave for privatisation was to 'stop the railways being used as a political football'. The argument went that the government would award franchises and then leave private firms to run the industry like any private business - free of political debate and Treasury interference.

How massively wrong that was! Railways have been a central focus of political discussions all the time I've been general secretary.

Politicians across the board have used the railways to try to make themselves look dynamic and energetic - people of vision, ever coming up with fresh initiatives. But how much are these undertakings worth?

It's rather like me announcing that I have decided to give every single member of ASLEF a Jaguar XJ. A new one, mind. No cheapskate stuff. 'How kind of good old Keith,' I hear you say. 'When will I be in receipt of said vehicle?'

If I said sometime in 2050, depending on me being re-elected every five years until then, you might feel a little cheated.

Something similar has been going on recently with politicians and high-speed rail. Both parties have looked busy and dashing as they've drawn lines on maps and quibbled about how far north the new track should run - but there's no chance of seeing a new train for at least 15 years - or three General Elections.

And far from taking rail out of the political arena, it has been centre stage. Labour invited the Tories to discuss the proposals with them, but they were turned down. Clearly a political argument is of more value than a new track. Then the party tit-for-tat continued with the Tories saying they'll start work on the line quicker than Labour. It's more akin to playground banter than infrastructure planning.

Never mind the football. Pass the rattle.

Keith Norman
General Secretary



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**More than
just a union**

ASLEF head office hosts Women's Day celebration

THE union opened its ballroom to members and friends for a lively, entertaining and thoughtful celebration of International Women's Day on 8 March.

Our Women's Representative Committee (WRC) organised an evening of pink bubbly, interesting speeches from the children's charity Plan International, Wendy Hurst and the general secretary and an energetic and joyful set from a vibrant drum band called Drumjam.

'I'm grateful to the WRC for putting on this event,' said Keith Norman. 'It's good to have a special day to mark the achievements and progress of women's struggle for equality.'



Cheers! ASLEF women raise their glasses to International Women's Day



The General Secretary pays tribute to the work of women members in ASLEF

Women making a difference at ITF

The theme of the second ITF Women's Conference in London was 'Making a Difference – Women Transport Workers in the 21st Century' reports Debbie Reay ...

ONE session concentrated on 'Developing Women Trade Union Leaders'. Three women who had done just this - Arlette Gay, of the Chilean LAN Union (LCCU), Beena Trivedi, the National Council Coordinator of Self Employed Women's Association in India (SEWA) and Sharan Burrow, President of International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) - all gave details of the positions they hold and explained the work they did to get there.

The conference opened as it closed – quite literally on a bright note with songs from the African delegates. After an introduction from the ITF Women's Committee Chair Diana Holland, Gloria Mills, President of the TUC, spoke about recruiting young people into unions. 'If a worker is encouraged to join a union from day one, they will probably remain a member all their entire working life,' she declared.

During the report on the activities of the ITF Women's Committee since the last conference in 2006, delegates from the Transport Workers Union America (TWUA) told conference of their struggle with Duram (which is part of National Express). They stressed the need to share company information across national borders, as the employer did.

This is why the ITF is important. It has affiliates in 751 unions from 154 countries and keeps transport unions informed about developments in other parts of the world.



ASLEF women go international at London conference

The global downturn has had a devastating affect on some industries, especially civil aviation, but many reports stressed that many employers, whether affected by the crisis or not, have used it as an excuse to cut workers pay and conditions, renegotiate contracts and in extreme cases to make redundancies. BP recently got rid of their final salary pension despite announcing profits of £8.5 billion!

Wendy Hurst and myself, the ASLEF delegates, both felt that meeting women from all over the world made us realise how fortunate we are in this country – but also that we can't afford to be complacent. Employers don't just hand out good pay and working conditions – they need to be fought for, both to obtain and retain them.

RMS BACK 10 APRIL PENSION RALLY



MEMBERS of the union's Retired Members Section are backing a national march and rally organised by the National Pensioners' Convention in London on 10 April – and they want you to come along and add your voice to protests

against cuts in state pensions, health care, education and other public services.

Section Secretary Tony West says, 'The state pension is totally inadequate, leaving at least 1 in 4 older people to live in poverty. We believe the welfare state and public services are an essential part of any civilised society. We will seek to protect that principle on 10 April.'

The rally will also serve to highlight that

- 7m households have a child living in poverty – and existing benefits provide a very limited safety net
- unemployment now stands at over 2m – and workfare offers no solution
- 10m adults are disabled and face huge barriers to escaping financial hardship
- the NHS is slowly being privatised behind a smokescreen of choice and competition – while patients suffer as a result
- our public services are now facing massive cuts and further privatisation

It is timed for April in order to stress to whichever party wins the General Election that most people in the UK don't want to see further cuts and privatisation of our welfare state.

The march will assemble at noon for 1pm at Temple Place on the Embankment and get to Trafalgar Square for a 2pm rally with speakers, music and entertainment.

Franchises 'cost UK railways £25 million a year'

A QUESTION in Parliament on 3 February revealed that the rail franchising system could be costing the industry over £25 million a year. 'Over the last four years over £100 million that could have been used to improve our railways has been utterly wasted and lost to the industry forever by rail franchising,' says ASLEF general secretary Keith Norman. 'It is incredible that anyone still clings to this profligate and discredited system.'

In response to a question from Liberal Democrat Norman Baker MP, transport minister Chris Mole conceded that in the four years between 2005-09 the Department for Transport spent £33.8 million to 'design and tender' rail franchises.

This was made up of £15.3 million for departmental staff, administration and advisers to 'review documentation' and £18.5 million in fees paid to 'external advisors'.

In addition to this, each company bidding for a franchise spends between £1 million and £4 million. Given that eight franchises were let - Southeastern, Greater Western, South Western, London Midland, East Midlands, Cross Country, Intercity East Coast and Southern - and that each attracted three or four bidders, franchise expenditure rockets to over £100 million.

'It is the policy of both the Labour Party and the TUC that rail franchising is ended. The information we now have proves that it needs to be done urgently before more millions are haemorrhaged from the service,' Keith concludes. 'It is a scandal that necessary improvements to rail - like upgrading carriages - are being held back on cost grounds while millions are lost by a foolish and inefficient system that benefits no one in the industry.'

'Franchising might be good for accountants and consultants - but it is a disaster for passengers and staff.'



FREE TRIP ON TRANS-SIBERIAN EXPRESS

EVER wanted to experience the Trans-Siberian Express? The good news is that you can, for free. The bad news is that it's a 'virtual' journey you can take on your computer. If you type 'Virtual Trans-Siberian Express' into Google, you can go on a virtual tour of the 5,752 mile route, looking out of the window in real time as you check the train's progress on maps. It depends whether you've got six days to sit in front of your computer!

Companynews

PAY SETTLEMENTS

SOUTH WEST TRAINS DEPOT DRIVERS

Our Depot Driver Members in South West Trains voted in favour of the Depot Drivers 2009/10 Pay offer which consists of a two-year pay deal with an increase of 1.5% in Year 1 and in Year 2 an increase based on RPI plus 0.5 or a 1.5% increase if greater.

FIRST GREAT WESTERN LTV DRIVERS

The Executive Committee (EC) accepted a two year pay offer for First Great Western (LTV) drivers - 1.5% in Year 1 and 2% or RPI plus 0.25% WREXHAM, SHROPSHIRE & MARYLEBONE RAILWAY

The EC accepted a pay offer for 2010: a no strings pay award of 3% or the February 2010 RPI whichever is the greater, from 1st April 2010 anniversary date.

HEATHROW EXPRESS 2010 PAY REVIEW

The EC accepted a pay offer for 2010 of 2.5%.

GATWICK EXPRESS - PAY HARMONISATION

Gatwick Express became part of the Southern franchise in September 2009 and members have agreed a salary increase to £36,366 with effect from 1st December 2009 and a further increase to £38,500 with effect from 28th February 2010. The offer equates to an increase of 9.25% and reduces the pay differential between the two sets of drivers to £285.00.

REST DAY WORKING

Freightliner Intermodal Free Turn Working is sanctioned until 29 May

London Midland Rest Day Working (RDW) is sanctioned until 29 May 2010

First Scotrail RDW is sanctioned until 28 March 2010

First Great Western RDW is sanctioned until 26 March 2011

East Midlands Trains RDW is sanctioned until 27 March 2010

First Transpennine Express RDW is sanctioned until 20 March 2010

COMPANY COUNCIL ELECTIONS

FREIGHTLINER HEAVY HAUL

Bro M Mooney, Crewe Branch was appointed as Local Council Representative ~ Western Constituency

LUL TRAINS FUNCTIONAL COUNCIL

Bro F Brennan, East Finchley / Golders Green and Bro T Cashman, West Brompton Branch were elected to the LUL Trains Functional Council

63% IN BRITAIN SAY TROOPS HOME BY CHRISTMAS

A POLL by the BBC last month revealed the level of unpopularity of the war in Afghanistan, showing that 63% of the British public want the troops home by Christmas. More than two-thirds (69%) also think the government has not done all it can to support forces fighting in the country.

In Germany opposition to the war has risen to 69% while the Dutch government was brought down because of its support for the war.



Fit notes take over from sick notes

How many times do we hear of bad managers bullying our colleagues back to work before they are fully recovered from being sick? asks Andy Viner. Those managers will be looking at a recent change in the law and hoping the new legislation will help them. They will be disappointed...



FROM the 6 April there will be a number of changes to the sick certificate that employees get from their doctor when they are off sick. Previously a sick note simply stated what was wrong and indicated that they should not be at work. The new medical certificate will either indicate that a person is not fit for work, or that they might be fit for work under certain circumstances. The doctor will also be able to suggest changes that would assist a return to work. There is no requirement for the GP to write anything apart from that the person is not fit for work and how long the person is 'signed off' for.

Many managers think that they know more than the doctor. In future they will not be able to insist that you get the GP to write what you can do. There is no change to the basic purpose of the certificate for employees to confirm their illness.

Equally there is no change to the process that a medical certificate will normally not be required until the 8th calendar day of sickness. Any occupational sick pay scheme you have will not be changed and that includes Statutory Sick Pay (SSP).

TWO OPTIONS

The new certificate will have two options. It will say either that the patient is 'not fit for work' or that the patient 'may be fit for work taking account of the following advice'. Then there will be four types of alterations listed which the GP can tick. These are

- a phased return to work,
- altered hours,
- amended duties,
- workplace adaptations (which includes a provision that any such adaptations will need to be risk assessed).

There will also be space on the form for the doctor to provide more information on the medical condition and how it may affect what the patient can do. In most cases there will be nothing to recommend and, as at present, you will go back to work once the GP feels you are ready.

Any disputes over sickness will be resolved as now - using the employer's grievances procedure.

Further information is available at http://www.tuc.org.uk/h_and_s/tuc-17591-f0.cfm <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/fitnote/>

COMPENSATION FOR REDUNDANT DRIVERS

AN ASLEF member who was refused redundancy pay when he was forced to leave his job working as a train driver has won more than £12,000 in compensation.

Stephen Morgan from Newport and a colleague were told they were being made redundant from their jobs as train drivers for DB Schenker in 2008. The pair were offered lesser roles as driver operators - which would have seen them take an £8,000 a year pay cut.

After a four week trial in the lesser role they both handed in their resignation because they weren't willing to accept lower pay and less responsibility.

ASLEF's lawyers, Thompsons Solicitors, argued the men were entitled to redundancy pay as they hadn't been offered suitable alternative employment and were within their rights to turn down the driver operator roles.

Cardiff Employment Tribunal agreed and awarded Mr Morgan over £12,000 in damages and the other union member £8,000.

Both men have since found new jobs as mainline train drivers for First Great Western.

Driver Morgan said he was pleased at the outcome which had involved a matter of principle. 'As far as we were concerned we hadn't been offered a realistic alternative role,' he said.

Driver's family compensated for Mesothelioma death

THE family of a South West London man who died from asbestos related disease has received compensation of £89,000. ASLEF member Alan Terry, 76, died just seven months after he was diagnosed with Mesothelioma – an incurable disease caused by exposure to asbestos.

Alan, a driver at Victoria, was diagnosed with Mesothelioma in July 2008 after attending his GP complaining about loss of energy and breathlessness.

Sadly Mr Terry and his partner died leaving his brother Michael Terry, 64, to pursue the claim. Michael said, 'The compensation was less important than making sure Terry's employer recognised the lives they had ruined by exposing him to asbestos.'

Keith Norman said, 'Asbestos was commonly used as fireproofing in locomotives resulting in many of our members being exposed to a risk of fatal disease. Many, like Driver Terry, were unaware of the dangers.'

It's all about you: Members' survey



AT THE end of last year we included a readership survey in an edition of the ASLEF Journal, writes National Organiser **Simon Weller**. Many thanks to the many of you who responded – over 8% which is well over the percentage normally returned in magazine surveys. It turned up some interesting facts, all of which will be used to try to improve our services and communication with members. Below are the main findings of the survey.

Q HOW DO YOU GET YOUR UNION INFORMATION?

The ASLEF Journal continues to be far and away the union's major communication tool, with local reps being the second most effective way of disseminating information. Branch meetings and branch secretaries are the next significant and it is encouraging to see that the website (www.aslef.org.uk) continues to grow as a source of information.

Q DO YOU ATTEND BRANCH MEETINGS?

Less than half – 42% – of those returning a survey form said they attended branch meetings regularly (as opposed to frequently).

Q WHICH AGE GROUP DO YOU FALL INTO?

The largest part of our membership is in the 45/60 bracket but a third are in the 30/45 range. Only 3% are under 30.

Q DO YOU HAVE AN E-MAIL ADDRESS?

In a major change since the survey we conducted five years ago, 99% of our members now have access to emails and 70% have regular access to the internet.

Q CAN YOU DESCRIBE YOUR REGULAR LEISURE ACTIVITIES?

Sport features high on outside interests, with a quarter playing them and 57% watching. Not surprisingly, travel is high up the agenda with eating out and walking both popular (which is rather a nice balance!). Just over half enjoy

reading, the same as those who consider bars and pubs a regular activity. 40% enjoy film but only 9% consider the arts a regular pastime. Half the respondents said they enjoyed Euro Travel, the same number who put music as a regular interest.

Q WHICH NEWSPAPER DO YOU READ REGULARLY?

Apart from the splendidly high 'write-in' vote for 'Whatever I find on the train', I'm afraid the Sun and the Mail just pipped the Mirror. Some way back, the Times is the most popular of the 'heavies' with the Guardian showing rather low.

Q WHICH BIT OF THE JOURNAL DO YOU TURN TO FIRST?

The order in which people read the Journal is news, letters, features and branch news

Q WHAT SORT OF TRAINING SHOULD THE UNION OFFER?

There was a resounding call from both active reps and lay members for more training in communications. This was the most-requested area, followed by courses on employment law, negotiating and people skills. I have been progressing this and will ensure it is central to our revised training programme, along with legislation, advocacy and negotiating skills.

'I'd like to thank everyone who took the trouble to return a survey,' Simon says. 'We will use the information to try to put resources into the most effective ways of communicating with our members.'



Newsinbrief

● LILLE FOCUS FOR ITF DAY OF ACTION

Rail unions across Europe will converge on the French town of Lille on Tuesday 13 April for a 1100 rally and demonstration calling for 'Rail Safety before Profit'. Lille is the home of the European Railway Agency.

Keith Norman says the purpose of the event is to protest at 'dangerous EU rules which open up rail to competition, and by doing so threatens safety and jobs'.

If you are interested in joining the ASLEF contingent, please contact your branch secretary or National Organiser Simon Weller.

● SCOTLAND AGAINST VIOLENCE AT WORK



There will be a rally on 19 April at 1230 in the City Council Chambers in Dundee to 'Back the Bill to End Violence Against Workers' – the Bill in question being Hugh Henry's

efforts in the Scottish Parliament to toughen sentences for those who assault public service workers. Called the Workers (Aggravated Offences) Bill (Scotland), we encourage all members who can make it to the rally to attend. For further information contact ASLEF's officer in Scotland, Kevin Lindsay.

● DON'T RELAX ZIMBABWE SANCTIONS, TUC TELLS ZUMA

As South African President Jacob Zuma began a state visit to the UK last month, the TUC urged him not to relax EU sanctions imposed on Zimbabwe's ruling elite for human rights abuses over the last decade.

TUC General Secretary Brendan Barber said, 'Despite the formation of the Government of National Unity, human rights violations have not stopped.'

● £2 BILLION ROLLING STOCK GRAVY TRAIN

ASLEF has expressed dismay at the news that HSBC bank is planning to sell its rolling stock company HSBC Rail for £2 billion, possibly to a consortium of private equity bidders. The bank purchased the train leasing company for around £700 million in 1997 and owns around 4,000 trains, approximately one third of the UK's total rolling stock.

'We've always known the rolling stock companies have been the cash cows of rail privatisation,' said General Secretary Keith Norman 'but profits of £1.3 billion for HSBC in just over a decade show just how scandalous the mismanagement of public assets was.'



OLYMPICS ON TRACK

Construction is well underway and either on time or ahead of schedules but are all the targets being achieved forgetting about safety and training? Alf Martin investigates ...

WITH the marathon of the London 2012 Olympics now on the home stretch with Sir Sebastian Coe taking delivery of the Olympic torch after the Canadian Winter Olympics, passengers and railway workers are benefiting from the transport investment made by the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA) with a number of projects already delivered.

RECYCLING THE RAILWAY

The first major transport project was ahead of time and within budget. The ODA relocated the old railway sidings depot – used to ‘park’ extra trains only needed during peak hours to make way for venue construction. It built a replacement 12-track facility to the Olympic Park’s North-East at Orient Way. Receiving an award for sustainable construction: 99 per cent of demolition material



Trains in railway sidings at the new Orient Way depot. The sidings are used to ‘park’ excess trains outside peak hours that are not used during the day.

from the original site was recycled or reused including 2,970m of track.

‘We needed to move the sidings,’ said Richard Johnson, ODA transport, ‘because they were originally in a part of the Olympic Park called Thornton’s Field stabling yard. The decision to move the facility was taken in early 2007. Construction took approximately a year, and the last train rolled out of Thornton’s Field by 29 May 2008 and the following Monday they all turned up at Orient Way.

‘During the construction the whole of the existing depot was recycled and reused. The buildings were taken down, crushed, and used in the foundations for the track. All track work was lifted, cleaned and then put back.

‘On the new site there is a welfare building for the train crews. Whilst the drivers move the trains backwards and forwards in and out of Liverpool Street to the East of England.’

BY RAIL AND WATER

Maximising the use of rail freight to deliver construction material to the Olympic Park in a sustainable way set a target of at least 50 per cent (by weight) of material by rail or water.

‘We felt, as a project, that it was really, really important to try to find more innovative ways of transporting materials to the Park,’ said Dan Epstein, ODA head of



Olympic Park freight deliveries arrive on site by rail and are then taken to individual sites across the Park, including the Olympic Stadium in the background.

sustainable development and regeneration,’ so we set ourselves a stretch-target to deliver 50 per cent of our materials by rail or water. We exceeded that target by rail alone.’

‘The materials which we are moving to the site by rail,’ claims Richard Jackson, ODA environment manager, ‘are granite from Leicestershire, recycled glass from the London boroughs, sand from the North Sea and limestone from the Mendips. The recycled glass we are using is in the production of concrete for the building of the venues. This helps us to reduce carbon emissions.’

ON TRACK

With £80m investment in the Docklands Light Railway (DLR) and co-funded by the ODA, 22 new railcars are in service to run three-car instead of two-car trains. Work to convert the former overground platforms at Stratford Regional station for its new extension is on course. A second crossing under the River Thames to Woolwich Arsenal opened in January 2009.

Domestic trains at Stratford International now go over a 36m-long bridge that forms a new entrance and exit at the station that aims to operate by the summer of 2010.

‘Our job is to enable spectators to get to the venues with ease, whether they’re watching football in Manchester, tennis at Wimbledon or going to the Olympic Park,’ says Iain Coucher, chief executive of Network Rail. ‘We also have to make sure it’s business as usual for millions of people who use the railway. That’s why our work is well underway planning the train timetables, preparing the London stations and making improvements in the capital and beyond.’

NEED FOR SPEED

The high-speed Javelin service, which will use domestic high-speed trains to run from St Pancras International into the Olympic Park during the games, beat its estimated seven-minute journey time during its first time trial. It arrived in six minutes and 45 seconds.

Paul Chapman, managing



Olympic gold medallist James Cracknell and Team GB diving hopeful Tom Daley. The athletes travelled to the Olympic Park by Javelin® train in under seven minutes in its first time trial between St. Pancras International and Stratford International

director of High Speed 1, which operates high-speed lines to mainland Europe, is a strong supporter of the 2012 games. 'We're pleased to be a central part of the transport success story,' he said.

FINE LINES

Work to upgrade the North London line, operated by London Overground, has started, with the first of the new air-conditioned trains already providing a breath of fresh air. Meanwhile, test running is taking place on the extended East London line. Improvements to the Victoria and Jubilee lines, through new trains and better signalling are all underway.

THE WORRIES

Although work on the transport links, new trains and green construction seems to be going to plan or ahead of it, Steve Grant, Aslef district organiser, has worries.

'We all want a successful Games,' says Steve, 'but we have concerns about some of the upgrades. There are delays on the Jubilee and Northern lines, there are issues over communications with the proposed decommissioning of the old systems leaving no back up, and we have worries about automatic doors and some of the fittings in the cab on the trains.'

'The time constraints cause safety issues, particularly not enough practical training for our members and, of course, we don't

want to end up like DLR with no drivers.

'The Aslef general secretary, Keith Norman and I, are due to meet Mayor Boris Johnson in a few weeks to discuss these and other concerns plus the £400m shortfall in funds. We don't want to see fare or tax increases to cover this shortfall. The PPP structure was imposed on London under the principle that it would transfer risk from the taxpayer to the private sector.

'We believe that the arbiter is preparing to leave the door open for TfL to cut back or delay the upgrades which could affect the Northern and Piccadilly lines.'

'If it all works well then it will create jobs for our members and that's one of the positive things.'

As the Journal went to press, the first of the Olympic Stadium's lighting towers were successfully lifted into place, taking the venue to its full height – 60m above the field of play. A 650-tonne crane lifted the 28m-high lighting towers into place, on top of the inner ring of the cable-net roof. The lighting towers will light up the field of play and are needed for high definition television footage. They are located above the stadium roof to ensure the best lighting angles and to avoid dazzling spectators, photographers and competitors.

Let's hope Mayor Boris sees the light and can assure Aslef that to achieve a magnificent 2012 Olympic Games crucial things like safety and training are as important as meeting schedules.

ASLEF backed General Election candidates in your District ...



District : 4

Constituency: Keighley

Candidate: Jane Thomas

JANE is a former university lecturer who has worked for a number of not-for-profit organisations. She has long shown an interest in public transport issues and has used her position on the National Policy Forum to lobby for bus re-regulation. Jane has called for more rail firms to be taken back into public ownership and campaigns for a high speed rail link from London through Leeds to the North East.

Jane says, 'Getting transport links right is crucial to inward investment and the future of the region in terms of jobs and economic growth. I look forward to working with ASLEF in the future to make sure we get the railway system the country deserves - and needs.'

Contact to offer assistance: Call Jane on 07957 240826 or email jane@janethomaslabour@googlemail.com



District: 6

Constituency: Luton North

Candidate: Kelvin Hopkins

I HAVE been the Labour Member of Parliament for Luton North since 1997, I'm active in ASLEF's Parliamentary Group and I'm the joint Co-ordinator of the Trade Union Group of MPs.

Public transport is a passion with me and I have outlined my detailed plans for a national dedicated freight rail route both in your Journal and at your annual conference.

I support the Socialist Campaign Group, the Co-op Party, War on Want, CND and the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy. I'm a founder member of Luton Campaign for Racial Harmony. I've also worked for the TUC and Unison – and been a semi-professional jazz musician!

Contact to offer assistance: Please sign up to the supporters list on www.kelvinhopkinsmp.com



District: 8

Constituency: Leyton and Wanstead

Candidate: John Cryer

JOHN was ASLEF's political officer, organising our Parliamentary group and becoming highly involved in the Freight on Rail campaign, before he took up a similar position with Unite.

John was the MP for Hornchurch - a few miles from his present constituency - from 1997 to 2005. He was recognised as an independent-minded and assiduous MP, voting against both the Iraq war and top-up fees. He only narrowly – by 400 votes – lost his seat in a constituency the Tories expected to win comfortably.

John was 'born into the Labour movement' and has spent most of his adult life in east London. He says, 'I aim to be accountable and accessible in Leyton and Wanstead and to be an effective voice in Parliament on behalf of 60,000 voters.'

Contact to offer assistance: Please phone John on 07966 589 833 or email john.cryer@unitetheunion.com

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TUNNEL VISION: LONDON ROUND-UP

One constant theme developed last time the union's Trains Functional Council met London Underground management for formal talks: that it makes no difference if the issue under discussion is right, moral or reasonable. The significant question for managers is, 'Will it cost LUL money?' This, allied to double standards, are the management approaches that run through all sections of this report ...

UPMINSTER

Agreement was reached locally at Upminster that a snack machine would be bought and installed, confirming that facilities outside are poor. In the 21st century this is the very minimum that should be expected when on a meal break, Staff Side believes a canteen should be provided at every location where we take a break. Rather than honoring the agreement all management could say was, 'We (the royal 'we', presumably) have to save £2.4 billion and this would cost too much money.'

Clearly unsatisfactory, the issue has been raised to higher level in the machinery.

INSTRUCTOR OPERATORS

Management is trying to renege on the agreement we have that any Instructor Operator who falls short of the required ability to coach others would be given additional training to reach the required standard. It could only be agreed that he or she reverted to becoming a Train Operator with protected earnings if, following this additional training, they still did not reach the standard required. Management wants to change this.

If in their view an Instructor Operators does

not meet the standard they want to use the disciplinary procedure to reduce them in grade.

TRUST

When negotiations take place with management there has to be some element of trust. So the Staff Side was shocked at something that happened after discussions had taken place on Duty Schedule guidelines. When management sent the changes they tried to slip in other changes that had not been agreed. And then they expect us to be reasonable!

DOUBLE STANDARDS

Double standards appear to be another theme of industrial relations at LUL. On the Central Line 'Valuing Time' meetings - where management explain how wonderful everything is - are held on licensed premises. But we're not allowed on licensed premises in uniform!

Personnel argued that 'the rule book in this instance is not applicable as staff are not on operational duties'. OK, we said. But it must also mean that management could not

discipline anyone for being in licensed premises in uniform even though they are not drinking. Management quickly changed their mind and will respond in due course.

It has been minuted in this meeting that staff allocated to 'Valuing Time' should do so within their rostered hours - so Train Operators should not attend 'Valuing Time' on days when rostered hours are shorter than the hours of 'Valuing Time' (inclusive of traveling time).

On the other hand management has proposed that 'Team Talks' will no longer be rostered, so they can cut 35 Train Operator jobs and save £1.9 Million. They'd still like us to do 'Team Talks' if we happen to be spare. No chance.

2009 AGREEMENT

A section of the meeting was taken up with breaches of the 2009 agreement - including moving staff to Neasden, which could have consequences for staff already there. The whole purpose of the agreement is to maintain minimum numbers of Train Operators. We want to make sure staff are recruited/ transferred to depots that could be under minimum numbers - and to ensure that upgrade pool Operators are on the waiting list for their home depot.

LILLIEBRIDGE

Lilliebridge, a local depot to Earl's Court on the District Line, has come back under the umbrella of LUL and management want to use the depot to keep the new 'S' stock. New walking routes and times have still to be agreed as management, to ASLEF's frustration, cancelled the arrangements to do this at the last minute. As the depot will be used by LUL there is no reason why Train Operators cannot use it to park cars - after all, office staff do and they do not work our extreme shifts. We are also determined to change the situation where there is no parking provided at Earl's Court depot.

HARROW ON THE HILL

Management have added to the agenda the heading 'Harrow on the Hill's accommodation'. Do they have underhand plans? They told us that the canteen will be ready when the second stage of moving Train Operators takes place later this year. But as we already knew that, why do they want to raise it? Watch this space!

FUTURE PLANS

We know that management have ideas to put forward, or plans to propose changes to a number of agreements. We're pretty sure these include how we measure walking times, fixed links, syndicate guidelines, a review of the role of SSTOs and the discipline procedure. We'll keep you informed.

Compiled by Andy Viner

WHAT'S THE RIGHT WAY LET'S BUY ONE AND SH



IF there is one thing ASLEF members have learned over the 130 years of our existence it is 'How not to run a railway'. We've seen mismanagement that has closed vital lines, produced ludicrous rosters, overcharged passengers, undermined track and undersold a national treasure and a vital service.

We're experts in 'how not to do it'.

Now we're going to take a more positive attitude. We're going to say how it should be done. We're going to buy a railway.

Well, to be more precise, we're going to take part in the franchising process for the East Coast Main Line. And as we do so we're going to draw up a manifesto that will examine what passengers, employees, business and freight users want from a railway - and explain how it can be delivered at a reasonable cost. Our aim is to show how can we improve a railway's services without

spending more money.

By applying to buy the franchise

The government intends to sell the railway. We need to give us time to make a strong case to the government on the needs of its passengers rather than

This is the start of the process. In the meantime, we look at how partnerships can work in our industry. We could work in our industry.

We'll be asking you for your views on the challenges and the solutions. Let's discuss them and that can become a model for the

RAIL IS A GOOD CASE FOR EMPLOYEE OWNERSHIP



**argues Nigel Mason,
the Policy Director
of the Employee
Ownership
Association**

IF WE have learnt anything from the financial meltdown and the recession of the last two years, it is that diversity matters. That includes diversity of ownership. In the modern global economy, most big businesses are now owned by anonymous investors and fund managers who care little for the social impact of a business; they just want short term "shareholder value", whatever the social cost.

It is a fact, incidentally, that in the UK individuals held over half of UK shares in 1963. Today they own one eighth. Foreign shareholding has risen from less than a sixth of shares in 1993 to 50% in 2007.

But it doesn't have to be like this. Ownership of businesses by employees is on the increase, not only because it is fairer, but also because it has been shown to lead to better business performance from more motivated staff, better customer outcomes and stronger businesses that take a responsible, long term view.

A FEW GOOD EXAMPLES

Take some examples. You can hardly open a newspaper these days, or turn on your TV,



without hearing about the John Lewis Partnership, the famous employee-owned retailer which continues to out-perform its competitors. Arup, the employee-owned structural engineering firm which designed the main Beijing Olympics stadium and the Gherkin in the City of London, continues to expand internationally from its UK base, now employing over 7,500 people. On a smaller scale, the 800 employee-owners of Central Surrey Health provide community health services to the residents of that county. There are hundreds of other examples, adding up to a sector now representing 2% of the economy.

These businesses all follow a simple but powerful logic. Their highly committed

employee-owners are motivated to provide excellent customer service, so customers keep returning, the businesses make good profits, the employees share in the rewards leading to high levels of engagement, and so the virtuous circle continues.

WHO IS ACCOUNTABLE?

Of course, these businesses are not run as collectives or co-operatives. They hire professional managers and are run with the same discipline as all big businesses. But ultimately, those managers are accountable to the shareholders – the employees – who are more knowledgeable and care more than the faceless institutional investors who sell out at

HOW TO RUN A RAILROAD? HOW THEM!

...we can do this in the public eye.
...the franchise at the end of this year. That will
...for a not-for-profit public service serving the
...its shareholders.

...this feature we asked a couple of experts to
...in the UK today, and specifically how it

...s and I hope you will respond. We know the
...build a picture of a railway that people want,
...the future.

Keith Norman, General Secretary

SHIP



A useful model for a better railway?

the first sign of difficulty. A rail franchise seems very well suited to employee ownership. After all, success depends on serving customers well, being flexible and responsive, going the extra mile. We wish ASLEF success in its campaign, and hope that the employees of the East Coast Mainline will blaze a trail that others will follow.

WHAT ABOUT A MUTUAL EAST COAST MAINLINE?

THE effects of the credit crunch have hit home across the real economy, and the rail industry is no exception. The country's premier railway has been taken back into state ownership and the owning groups and train operating companies have publicly wrung their hands about the reduced margin that their shareholders are being forced to operate under as a result of the contracts they have willingly entered in to.

At the same time, more than half of all passengers surveyed by Passenger Focus feel that they are not getting value for money out of their journeys. One thing's clear – something's got to give in the rail industry.

The basic problem is a gap in ownership and accountability. Across the majority of the network there is little competition, and private companies are only taking a small amount of the risk involved in running and investing in the railway. The privately run TOCs provide a vital public service and receive large sums of public money, but when it comes to the tough decisions that need to be taken, the shareholder is king.

A CO-OP IS A GOOD SOLUTION

This is why we believe that there is a need for a co-operative train operator, and fully support ASLEF's bid for the East Coast mainline. The difference between a co-operative and private operator would be simple – it would exist to provide a service for its members rather than generate profits for shareholders. This means that any profits made would be reinvested into providing better services for passengers and reward employees for their efforts.

Run democratically, on a one-member-one-vote basis, it would give real power to users and workers – building services on the experience of front line staff and the needs of passengers rather than the interests of city investors.

PRACTICAL MEASURES

So how would this work in practice?

If a co-operative bid were successful, the East Coast mainline service would be run by a



The author, Michael Stephenson, is General Secretary of the Co-operative Party. He worked at 10 Downing Street for Tony Blair, has been the Labour Party's Policy Officer and worked in Australian politics as Chief of Staff for both the Premier and Minister of Education of the State of Queensland

'community benefit' co-operative. All employees of the co-operative and passengers on the East Coast would be given the right to become individual members of the organisation. They, and other stakeholders, would then elect a Member's Council, which would be responsible for approving the strategy of the organisation and have the power to hire and fire the organisation's directors.

The East Coast co-operative would be structured so that all of its members had a voice. It would provide a genuine forum for informing and consulting with members of the public and employees. It would provide information that would ensure that passengers and employees could remain fully informed of progress made, as well as a means through which they could shape the services offered.

Moving to a co-operative model would transform the way that services are run, and provide a benchmark against the privately owned TOCs. Let's call time on shareholder culture, and make the East Coast mainline mutual.



REGULATOR 'CONCERNED' ABOUT NR CUTBACKS

The rail regulator, the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR, last month raised 'significant concerns' about Network Rail's maintenance restructuring plans which ASLEF claims threatens safety and could cost 1,500 job losses.

The ORR said that on the London to Scotland West Coast Main Line not all the 'technological and procedural changes necessary to support the new maintenance regime had been implemented'. It added that classifying vital safety roles and tasks as 'non-productive' means there is a risk of local managers cutting back on site lookouts and safety briefings.

ASLEF general secretary Keith Norman said, 'The rail regulator has joined staff and unions in condemning the Network Rail cuts. That is because we are concerned with safety. Those applauding the cuts - basically the government and Network Rail itself - are concerned with money. Who do you think

passengers will side with? Or don't they matter in today's rail industry?'

TRAIN CRASH IN BELGIUM

The union sent a message of support and solidarity to our sister unions in Belgium expressing our sympathy and support for them in the wake of the crash near Halle which last month claimed the lives of 18 people including one of the train drivers. The other remains in a critical condition.

Keith Norman passed on ASLEF's deepest sympathy to all those having friends, relations or work colleagues involved in the crash at Halle earlier this week, saying, 'At times like these our nationality is unimportant. The names on the sides of our trains are immaterial. The uniforms we wear are of no consequence. We are part of a global family of trade unionists and rail workers.'

SECURE FUTURE FOR UNION LEARNING PROJECT

The future of the ASLEF 'Proud to Educate' life-long learning project is secure following successful bids for financial backing.

- Last month the union
- secured £150K in Wales to set up a union learning project
 - obtained an additional £35k in Scotland to work within the freight companies; and
 - had news of a successful bid for £525K from the English Union Learning Fund (ULF).

It was also decided to change the name from 'Proud to Educate' to 'ASLEF - Education' to reflect our objectives more clearly. For more information on ASLEF learning projects contact Shirley Handsley by phone on 07739 473 174 or by email at shirley.handsley@aslef.org.uk

ASLEF SCOTTISH LEARNING

ASLEF in Scotland has recently opened its eighth workplace learning centre, in Edinburgh Waverley, making a total of nine if we include the main hub at Stow College in Glasgow.

CHINA HAS FASTEST TRAIN

CHINA has unveiled the world's fastest train - which can reach speeds of 245mph. The new system connects Guangzhou and Wuhan at an average speed of 217mph - and it took just four years to build. The super-high-speed train reduces the 664-mile journey to just a three-hour ride and cuts the previous journey time by more than seven-and-a-half hours. The average for high-speed trains in Japan is 150mph while in France it is 172mph.

The Rail Union Learning Centre in Inverness Railway Station has provided education for well over 100 rail union members, says Jim Baxter. The most popular have been two stages of computing, a literacy course ran as part of a 'Earn as You Learn' scheme in which ScotRail staff are paid overtime for their attendance, and more recently a 'Spanish for Beginners' course. ASLEF is now taking the same learning model to Fort William, Oban and Mallaig.

PROGRESSIVE LONDON CONFERENCE 2010

ASLEF had a prominent presence at Progressive London's 2010 Conference as a sponsor of the event and the union led a session on 'Cut Fares Not Investment' with Assembly Member Valerie Shawcross and Steve Hart from Unite.

Progressive London was initiated by Ken Livingstone in 2008 as a 'cross-party, multi-community forum involving politicians, artists, trade unionists, and campaigners to promote social progress in the capital.'



LATE ARRIVAL FOR NEW CARRIAGES
ASLEF is concerned that the government has postponed a £7.5 billion contract to upgrade the rolling stock on the East Coast and Great Western lines following anxieties over the state of the public finances until after the election. Transport Secretary Lord Adonis has ordered an independent review of the deal for 1,400 new carriages.

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ASLEF's Open Freight Forums

ADVANCE NOTICE

The union is organising two open freight forums to discuss, debate and inform ASLEF's freight strategies.

Join fellow members at

Doncaster Trades and Labour Club
on Wednesday 31 March 2010 at 11 am

Bristol Marriot Hotel, Lower Castle Street
on Wednesday 7 April 2010 at 11 am



**More than
just a union**

Presentations at Gidea Park

WE had the pleasure of the company of district organiser Andy Morrison and EC member Nigel Gibson at our well attended Branch meeting on 28 January.

Andy and Nigel spoke on various subjects important to the membership and Nigel once again thanked the membership for their support during last year's pay strike on NXEA.

After a question and answer session it was time for a presentation to Bro Doug Tilbury who had taken retirement at the end of a long career.

Andy Morrison presented Doug with a digital TCV, an engraved tankard and a

retirement certificate. We will miss Doug's banter and sense of humour and he has all our best wishes.

Andy also presented our health and safety rep Bro Khalid Rana with a Working Life Excellence awards. He thoroughly deserves it for all the hard work he has done since become our rep. Khalid's tutor at Haringey College, Jonathan Jeffries called him 'an exemplary learner' and said his portfolio of work was 'of the highest standard'.

We then retired to the bar to drink to Doug's fond farewell.

Steve Meredith, Secretary, Gidea Park branch



Andy presents Doug with a retirement certificate and the union's best wishes



Khalid's presentation moved from gravity to giggles!

WALES LABOUR PARTY 2010

IN HIS inaugural address as Welsh Labour leader Carwyn Jones said the Party faced the 'fight of its life' in the upcoming election while Prime Minister Gordon Brown attacked Conservative plans to cut public spending.

The union's motion on Welsh Rail Infrastructure welcoming the announcement of the electrification of the Great Western Line and calling for greater investment in Welsh railways was unanimously accepted by Conference. The delegation attended fringe meetings and raised the plight of the rail freight sector in South Wales with MPs and AMs in addition to handing out copies of the Welsh Journal supplement to delegates which were enthusiastically received.



ASLEF's delegation to the 2010 Welsh Labour Party Conference at the Brangwyn Hall, Swansea consisted of Stan Moran, District Organiser, District 7 and John Boreham (Camarthen)

STRATFORD: A WARM REUNION ON CHILLY NIGHT

THE annual reunion of the Stratford Social and Welfare Club was held in the Railway Tavern on Saturday 30 January, and was well attended despite it being a bitterly cold evening. It gave retired and current members an opportunity to reflect on past glories when Stratford Depot was the largest in the world.

Today it is an intercontinental rail link as well as a major construction site housing the stadiums for the 2012 Olympic Games.

Thanks to Chris' daughter for running the raffle, to the landlord and landlady Tom and Jan for laying on a delicious buffet and to all the bar staff for making us most welcome, as they always do.

P.J. Dodgson, Secretary, Stratford branch



WE found this photo in the union's archives, and wondered what on earth was going on! It's an image from 1958 showing the crew of the 'Elizabethan' - Driver Edward Turner of Ilford and Fireman Fred Foister - being given 'capillary pens which are leak-proof, write unaffected by changes in temperature and atmospheric pressure and fill themselves when the nib is dipped in ink'. The accompanying press release also says the King's Cross stationmaster F.W. Goring (in the topper) 'filled the footplatemen's pens himself'. It's always been a busy and challenging life for management!

KINGS CROSS RAISES MONEY FOR NEEDY CHILDREN

THE King's Cross retired section held its final social gathering of 2009 in the Lucas Arms just around the corner from our old work-place.

Once again it was well attended, and a good time was had by everybody.

Very special thanks to Roy Speller, the best waiter at King's Cross, and his generosity with the loose change - which went to 90 needy children.

H. Connally, retired section, Kings Cross



ASLEF's support for Labour extended to an opera recital!

District 6: ASLEF's secret Labour Party donors

A NUMBER of ASLEF activists attended a constituency Labour Party dinner on 18 February. The event was hosted by the Chair of Parliament's Transport Select Committee, Louise Ellman, who is MP for Liverpool Riverside.

It started with a bang for ASLEF as my ASLEF colleague Gary Boyle and I were lucky enough to win first prize in the raffle. In light of the upcoming General Election we gave back the £100 prize to support the Party. I hope this won't lead to Gary and I being exposed as secret Labour Party donors!

The entertainment was 'A Night At The Opera'. I was looking forward to renditions of 'Bohemian Rhapsody' and 'Radio Ga Ga' – but how wrong I was! We were treated to a number of operatic renditions, though not my 'cup of tea', were quite mesmerising and extremely well received.

Guest Speaker Lord Andrew Adonis, the Secretary of State for Transport, spoke well with the railways at the top of his agenda. He mentioned the East Coast Mainline and its government ownership which led to a few cheers from the ASLEF table. He also expressed his appreciation of our union and his support for our ideals and vision.

After the meal we had the opportunity to mix with our political and trade union colleagues and to promote the work of our union. I spoke to Lord Adonis about the role of Health & Safety in our industry and trade union.

It was an excellent evening and I think the ASLEF delegates made a positive impact and impression on those present. On a personal note it was a pleasure to meet Michael Shields, the Liverpool Football supporter who was wrongly imprisoned in Bulgaria, and was only released thanks to a vigorous campaign which included Louise Ellman. He was finally granted a Royal



Eating for victory! Colin Smith, Lord Adonis and Louise Ellman

Pardon in September 2009.

Many thanks for a wonderful evening to Colin Smith, our District Organiser and to my other ASLEF colleague. It was an honour to represent the union at the event.

Alan Moss, Longsight Branch

Upcoming events

LONGSIGHT REUNIONS

The next Longsight Reunion will be held on Wednesday 12 May at Peak Rail, Rowsley and will include the private hire of the railway and Stanier 8F 48624 with train. There will be a bar/buffet. All 'Black 8' drivers and firemen are welcome. Contact Mel Thorley on 07778 556760 or Ray Bullen on 07952 686495.

All Manchester area men and women are welcome to the Navigation Road Club at 1300 on Thursday 14 October for the next Longsight event.

DIDCOT REUNION

The Didcot ASLEF reunion will take place on Saturday 1 May at the Railway Staff Club at Didcot from noon onwards. All present and associate members are welcome.

WHAT THE UNION WAS DOING 100 AND 50 YEARS AGO

100 years ago the Journal reported a disappointing meeting in London – only 800 turned up! And 50 years ago there was a ceremony to name the last steam loco ...

100 YEARS AGO

'A.E.T' gave this account of a public meeting in the April 1910 Journal ...

"A 'mass propaganda' meeting, under the direction of the London Branches, was held at the New Bedford Palace of Varieties, Camden Town, on Sunday evening, February 20th, when Mr. A. Fox, Mr. W. Warwick and Mr. J. Bromley addressed the audience, supported by Brother W. Clarke (late E.C. member for North London), Brother Stevenson (E.C. member for South-East District) and several branch secretaries. Unfortunately the weather which prevailed, and which no one will forget in a hurry, told against us considerably, yet the muster, over 800 persons, was an indication of what might have proved a record meeting under more favourable climatic conditions. Nor was it altogether comfortable for the speakers; doors slammed, curtains swayed and rain pelted them from above, whilst from without the unmerciful wind shrieked and roared, which must very forcibly have reminded those present of the liabilities and responsibilities of those on the road for whom, and the whole of the fraternity, the speakers were ardently emphasizing the need of protection and just recognition, which could only be secured by the consolidation of all locomotive-men in their own Society, to wit, the A.S.L.E.& F."

50 YEARS AGO

The Editor's Notes included these words on 'The End of an Era' ...

"March 18th, 1960, at Swindon (Western Region) took place the formal naming ceremony of the last steam locomotive to be built by British Railways...

Mr Hanks (Chairman, Western Area Board) made fitting reference to this in his opening speech, in the course of which he said:

"I am sure it has been truly said that no other product of man's mind has ever exercised such a compelling hold upon the public's imagination as the steam locomotive. No other machine, in its day, has been a more faithful friend to mankind and has contributed more to the cause of industrial prosperity in this, the land of its birth, and throughout the world.

"No other machine, somehow, is so human and so gentle and yet, when unleashed, is capable of such prodigies of strength – nothing quite so graceful in action and nothing quite so romantic."

Extracts selected and edited by Jane Pimlott



These are the pages where you talk to us. We welcome your letters, either by mail to the **ASLEF Journal at 9 Arkwright Road London NW3 6AB** or by email to **journal@aslef.org.uk**. Because of our space constraints, please try to keep your contributions as short as you can. This month we continue our **STAR LETTER feature**. The immensely lucky winner will pocket a rich range of ASLEF regalia!



GENEROUS GESTURE

I am writing to express my deepest thanks to all the officials and members of the Marylebone branch for the help and assistance they gave me as I recovered from surgery following a serious leg injury. In particular, I'm very grateful for the collection they arranged and the addition from branch funds to help me and my family in the very difficult financial times resulting from being on half pay.

I was truly shocked at the amount on the cheque and very moved by the support I received within the branch and union.

I would also like to thank the LDC reps, John Shaw and Ken Goldsmith, for all their help and assistance in getting me back to work on light duties, and back on full pay. It's a great relief to know I'm earning my keep again.

I know the branch and union will continue to offer me support during my efforts to regain my fitness so that I can make a return to driving duties and I look forward to seeing everyone on a more regular basis!

Dave Kentish, Driver, Marylebone

MORE TALES OF TORAM

I REFER to your article in the March Journal in regard to Toram Beg. I knew him as a steam driver when I worked at Eastfield Depot. He came there to turn his locomotive to work his return train from Glasgow Queen Street to Edinburgh Waverly. We regularly had to assist him because he always had a large 'Pacific' class loco.

Last month's article says he was born in 1924, but this must be wrong. In the Forward to 'The Lighted Flame' it says he 'began his railway career on the old North British Railway in 1910'. This is more accurate as the NB was amalgamated into LNER under the 1921 Railway Act.

It follows that he could not have been born in 1924 because had this been so he could not have been employed on the railway until 1939/40. The most likely date of his birth is 1893.

Some of the very good members and footplatemen at the now-closed Haymarket Depot might raise this matter with you. However there might not be too many left who, like me, can remember these things.

WISE WORDS AND THANKS

AT THE beginning of this year I passed a signal at danger. The incident included a breach of cab discipline for which I was (quite properly) disciplined. Other drivers will know of the effects of being suspended and removed from driving duties but I was surprised at the impact that this had on me.

Consequently I would like to record my thanks to my colleagues of Southampton Northam branch, and my friends of Bournemouth branch for their kindness and support at this difficult time. Also my special gratitude

to our LDC Alan Loughlin for his dedication and determination whilst representing me. He has been a credit to ASLEF.

Happily I am now back at work, which is easily the best outcome imaginable. And if I'm a little wiser it is in the sense of how important our union is to us. We all make mistakes, after all, and my experience is that we need our representatives and fellow members to help us through these troubles.

Nigel Hockley, Southampton

Neil Milligan, Polmadie Branch and former ASLEF General Secretary

BLECHLEY BACKED ON FLYER

I MUST agree wholeheartedly with the article on page four of the March 'Journal' regarding the proposed conversion of the St Albans Abbey branch to a tram-style operation.

This branch line needs the reinstatement of the passing loop at Bricket Wood and the provision of a through connection at Watford Junction on to the Euston main line.

The first will enable the service on the branch to be increased to two trains per hour, which will make it more competitive with bus services. A train every 45 minutes just doesn't cut it! I don't think the Abbey branch will ever be a truly equal competitor with the Watford to St Albans buses, due to the inconvenient location of Abbey station, at the foot of Holywell Hill - but two TPH would help redress the balance somewhat! Maybe the branch could be extended to City station, in the same way that the Blechley to Bedford branch was extended from St. Johns station to Bedford!

The advantages of a through connection to Euston hardly need explanation. With it, the branch could be operated in the same way as TfL's Chesham branch of the Metropolitan Line

with probably only two through trains in each direction per day: two ups in the morning peak and two downs in the evening.

Rodney Salter, Retired driver, Rickmansworth branch

LABOUR UNION FUNDING

HE'S at it again. David Cameron says he will 'move to scrap automatic union funding of the Labour Party'.

If the 'floating voter' read this it could cost every union and their membership dearly. We need positive action now before it is too late.

Kevin Christie, Retired Driver

ARTHUR GRIFFITHS

I SUBMITTED an obituary for Arthur Griffiths in last month's Journal and a paragraph was cut that I know Arthur would have wanted me to express.

I'm sure he would have wanted to thank our General Secretary, Executive Committee and all the branches who supported our appeal on behalf of Arthur when times were hard for him. Arthur was genuinely moved by the response you showed.

Thanks are also due to our District Organiser, Stan Moran, for his help and work when it was needed, to Kevin Gale, First Great

PERFECT TIMING, USEFUL TRAINING



New officials made up the Grantham course

IN January, I volunteered to be Secretary of the Westbury branch, rather earlier than I'd planned. I'd been thinking of applying in a few years when my three children had left school, but fate often changes plans and the job needed doing.

With perfect timing I received an ASLEF circular about the Branch Secretaries course for the beginning of March, at Stoke Rochford Hall, Grantham.

I secured my place and all too soon departure day arrived. I knew little about Grantham (apart from it being the birthplace of 'She who must not be named') - or even where it is.

The sumptuous setting of Stoke Rochford Hall was easily surpassed by the camaraderie and friendship of my 17 fellow students. During the 3-day course we learned about our role from the tutor and guest speakers - the most popular I'm sure being Tony from Finance.

I now feel more confident about my abilities, especially as we know help and advice is only a phone call away if we need it.

Thanks to everyone on the course for making it a pleasurable and rewarding experience and a big 'thank you' to all at ASLEF HQ for arranging these valuable courses.

Biddy Watson, FGW driver and Secretary, Westbury branch

Western's Operations Director and to our local Driver Managers at Swansea for their help and understanding during Arthur's long hard fight against cancer.

I know Arthur was truly grateful for the kindness shown to him and would want it to be expressed publicly.

John Rossiter, Secretary, Swansea branch

PLEASING TRIBUNAL WIN

MAY we take this opportunity to thank ASLEF - and in particular, Stan Moran, Nick Whitehead, Brian Corbett along with Claire Anthony at Thompsons Solicitors in Cardiff -

for the help and support they have provided over the last 12 months regarding our fight for a redundancy claim which was successfully upheld at a recent Industrial Tribunal.

We were freight train drivers for DB Schenker based at Newport in South Wales, and as 'junior men' we faced the threat of redundancy as our depot was identified as being one of the 'at risk' depots. We were told that we would be 'put back' to Driver Operators and faced a substantial drop in salary and affected pension rights. Some ground-staff members would also be displaced, as we would be doing their work.

With the threat of redundancy looming

we were fortunate to be offered employment as mainline drivers with First Great Western based at Bristol. With this in mind we put in for our redundancy entitlement. However, this was refused on the pretence that we had been offered jobs as Driver Operators with DB Schenker and were therefore not being made redundant.

We believed all along that we were justified in seeking a redundancy payment and with the support of ASLEF our claim has been successfully upheld.

Steve Morgan and Peter Little, FGW Drivers, Bristol West

THE DIRECT LINE

NXEA depot drivers felt their views were not being listened to at local level, so they got on to ASLEF direct. On hearing our concerns ASLEF swiftly organised a meeting solely for the depot drivers. Very unusual, but with feelings running high and safety issues involved there was little time to waste. The meeting took place on 1 March and the support from the depots was fantastic.

We were all pleasantly surprised by the presence of so many union reps who came to listen to us. They seemed genuinely shocked by some of our concerns and asked as many questions of us as we did them. Our spirits were raised and we believe with the help of our union we will be recognised as an important cog in the smooth running of our railway.

Special thanks to N. Gibson for arranging the meeting and his colleagues who attended.

Leo Paul, Depot Driver, Southend Branch

GONE - BUT YOU'RE NOT FORGOTTEN

I AM writing to express my sincere appreciation and thanks to members of the ASLEF family all over the country for the selfless generosity you have shown to me recently.

I was diagnosed with an illness in 2009 which forced a reluctant decision to retire from the railway. Following a national appeal around the ASLEF depots a donation was forwarded to me and my family which left us overwhelmed by the kind response and support shown by my fellow brothers.

I was a driver for 24 years and 3 days exactly. And despite many of those working days when I would rather have been off, I certainly miss the banter and company of some fantastic people I worked with.

My heartfelt thanks go to all the loyal members in Yoker and Queen Street branches in Glasgow. The intervention and effort by Council members and brothers Ian Smith and Andy Ferguson, together with branch secretary John McCue, needs an

acknowledgement of appreciation.

Brian Connelly, former driver, Glasgow

NO REST DAY AGREEMENT IN CROSSCOUNTRY

THE CrossCountry Company Council wishes to set the record straight regarding Rest Day Working. John Hay's report for the Scottish section of the March Journal was wrongly edited.

In fact, CrossCountry (operated by Arriva) has decided it does not want a Rest Day Working (RDW) agreement with ASLEF. It did not request that ASLEF continues the RDW agreement before the sanction ran out at the end of February. When the Company Council met management on 6 January (see the minutes posted on Company Council link on the ASLEF website) we made it clear that there were three issues that would need to be addressed before we would support any request for a RDW agreement effective from March:

- Driver Establishments - the current calculator has not proved robust enough to allow satisfactory provision of the train service without the requirement for RDW.
- Enhancement for Rest Day Working.
- Issues relating to link arrangements and route/traction knowledge at the recently combined Birmingham depot (comprised of ex-Virgin and ex-Central Drivers) have not been dealt with to the satisfaction of

the Local Reps.

The management effectively responded on these matters with what was considered a two fingered salute.

The Company Council is fully aware of freight drivers being made redundant at this time, and as stated we are seeking to increase the head-count in CrossCountry. We have not managed to achieve this yet, but if this proves possible in ours, and other, TOC's then hopefully the number of ASLEF members forced to leave the industry will be minimised. Regarding enhancements, it is our view that a penalty on a company for requiring RDW would assist to focus minds into ensuring a robust establishment is agreed and implemented in an expeditious manner. At Birmingham depot the Local Reps have been frustrated in their attempts to improve the working arrangements of our members there, and we will continue to support them in their endeavours to move forward.

Since the start of March, management have been using every trick in the book in an attempt to maintain the train service. Despite this, there were several part cancellations in the first week without RDW alone. The Company Council has and will continue to raise every breach of the agreements. Along with our full-time officer Colin Smith, we will not stand by while the company attempts to force drivers to work outside agreed terms and conditions. Our simple message for all ASLEF members is - if you are not sure if you are compelled to fulfil a request - phone a friend.

ASLEF has a comprehensive network of

local and Company Council reps. Much information can also now be obtained on Company Council specific links to the ASLEF website

Finally, CrossCountry Drivers have to work with Traincrew Controllers (the equivalent of TCS's) and while everyone has their job to do, and no one wants a poor working relationship, both they and drivers need to realise that it is not acceptable for any pressure to be put on drivers to do non-contractual overtime, or work outside the T's & C's. Drivers should report any such instances to their reps as soon as possible.

CrossCountry has a 99% ASLEF membership and by working together we will continue to move forward. Unity is strength!

Dave Sullivan, Chairman, John Hay, Secretary, Miles Bidgood, Ian Clarke, Nigel Ryder, CrossCountry Company Council

THOSE 66s AGAIN

ON behalf of the D B Schenker Traction and Training sub-committee, I feel obliged to respond to the letter Driver Phil Garner sent to the February Journal.

Firstly, I can't find any evidence of any communication between Driver Garner and any member of this committee. It would have been more purposeful if he had contacted us rather than whoever.

Nevertheless he makes some good points. We have made our concerns about

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NXEA 2009 STRIKE BADGE commemorating solidarity of ASLEF members. Purchase (£3 plus p&p) from NXEA Branch Secretary or District Council 5 Secretary. Contact M Steele on. 07788 153954. Proceeds to District Council 5 Education Fund and ASLEF Fighting Fund.

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ASLEF TRAIN DRIVER collects ASLEF/railway badges, signs, shed plates, signalling items, etc. Phone Mark on 01562 746537 or (mobile) 07789301551

cab noise and vibration forcefully to the company. Extensive tests and monitoring are currently being carried out on Loco 66035 and a number of initiatives are being undertaken to try to eliminate some of the irritating noise and vibration.

As a driver I can concur that some of the cabs I have driven in have been littered and dirty. We have been striving to get management to provide each cab with cleaning equipment, but I have to remind everyone that some of the problems could be solved if we were all a little more respectful of our working environment.

I note that Driver Garner believes the new drivers' seats are now dated. The first were only fitted in March 2008 and the fleet was completed last year. The general consensus appears to be favourable.

The state of the side windows is also a

great concern and in line with the Squash campaign. The side film did have an effect on reducing cab temperatures, but I feel that it was perhaps the sliding window that damaged it or the bubbling effect rather than drivers deliberately vandalising it, as was suggested.

Many of the issues Driver Garner raised are already being discussed and are still ongoing. We have never been able to solve perceived problems overnight, but we are working hard to try to improve our working environment.

If (as always) any driver wishes to raise any concern, please contact your local Company Councillor who will pass it on to the relevant Sub Committee.

Roy Hickman, Chair, and Roy Hickman, Secretary, DBS Traction Training Sub Group

work colleagues.

● Ivor Smith

Ivor Smith of Bedminster Bristol, a former Bath Road driver, passed away on 3 January at the age of 90. His funeral was held on 22 January. He will be greatly missed by all who knew him.

● George Mail

Robert George Mail died from cancer on 7 November last year aged 87. He started working for the Great Western Railway at Bath Road in 1940. We extend our sympathy to all family and friends.

Bernard Kennedy, Secretary, Bristol Branch

FOUR BROTHERS PASS ON FROM BISHOPS STORTFORD

THE last year has sadly seen the passing of four retired drivers from Bishops Stortford. Each was a staunch ASLEF member - as quite a few managers soon realised!

- George Dennison could make the worst diagrams into the most favourable. He once put my name forward for the LDC - quite unbeknown to me!
- Peter Curtis, who loved to recall steam times, took part in three steam weekends of recent years.
- Mick Handley was known as 'Bruv' to everyone. He could wind up anyone with a few simple words and walk off with a chuckle.
- Jack Root, ex-Branch Secretary, was the depot's first Health and Safety Rep. In his quiet way he persuaded me to replace him in this role, and guided me in the months before he retired.

They were all great characters and they'll will be missed by everyone who knew them.

Alan Swann, Retired Members Section, Bishops Stortford

MICK BLACKBURN ONE IN A MILLION

I ATTENDED the Stratford reunion this year after a 10 year gap and was deeply upset to hear that my old friend Mick Blackburn had passed away.

I started at Stratford in March 1971 at the age of 16 and Mick began not long after. We became good friends but Mick was different in the sense that he had a great trade union brain.

He got me to come to my first branch meeting where I got to know and admire my other old friend Tony West. I came to look forward to attending branch meetings. To me Mick Blackburn was one in a million and I will always remember our happy memories.

Martin Gilbert, Edge Hill Branch

BRIAN GARFIELD: A DONNY MAN

FORMER Doncaster driver Brian Garfield has died aged 71. He died on 2 January. I'm grateful to his pal 'Big Jack' Howsley for passing on the sad news.

Brian was a great chap, always pleasant, who wouldn't even let his fight against cancer hold him back. Indeed we were able to speak to him when he made it to last year's Kings Cross Reunion.

Born in 1938, Brian joined the

footplate grade in 1954 and remained in Doncaster throughout his career. He remained loyal to ASLEF even into his retirement.

We send condolences to Brian's brothers and sister - Ray, Muriel, David and all his family, friends and work colleagues. May he RIP. He will be sadly missed.

Peter Smith, Reporter, Retired Members Section

'LEN' COULSON FISHY TALES FROM AN EX-PARA

LESLIE COULSON died of pneumonia on 11 January aged 77. Affectionately known as 'Tales of the River Bank', Len, as most called him, was a keen fisherman who would travel far and wide in pursuit of 'the big one'.

Born in 1933, Len never married and looked after his mum until she died. After retirement he faded into the background despite our efforts to get him to come to our reunions. Unfortunately he ended up in a home, but his memory will live on. I recall spending many an hour in his company in the days of double manning, as he would tell the tales of his life and of his time as a paratrooper. He's gone, but not forgotten. **Peter Smith, Reporter, Kings Cross branch**

SADNESS AS FOUR RUGBY DRIVERS ARE MOURNED

IT IS with regret that I have to report the passing of three Rugby drivers.

- Anthony Cross, who was born in May 1922 and retired on 13 August 1983. Driver

Cross died on 21 December last year.

- Reg Jones retired on 26 September 1987 and died on 28 December 2009 at the age of 86.
- Ted Hartwell died on 28 December aged 70. His passing was a great shock to his relatives.
- Eric Perkins was 81 when he died on 15 March. Eric spent his entire working life at Rugby, where he began work aged 14.

Our condolences go to the families and friends of our departed brothers.

Alex Lakic, Secretary, Rugby branch

THREE BRISTOL DRIVERS PASS ON

IT IS with great sadness that I report the deaths of three Bristol drivers.

● Ivor Sterry

Ivor passed away in January aged 84. He enjoyed a long railway career at Evesham, Honeybourne, Southall and Bristol Bath Road depots. Ivor was a popular figure and always enjoyed a laugh and a joke with his work mates. He was declared a hero in his younger days when he saved a young boy from drowning whilst at work. He will be much missed by family, friends and former

CUBA: THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE POLITICS

An exhibition by Cuban-born but UK-based photographer Alejandro Gortazar shows that Cuba isn't a slogan or a left-wing plot – it's a Caribbean island teeming with bright and lively people ...

IT'S difficult to get a real idea of what Cuba is like. It is discussed as if it were a political debate rather than a country. Right-wing commentaries give the idea that it's a poverty-stricken island deluged by constant hurricanes and inhabited by grey and repressed people – while some on the Left portray it as a paradise on earth that is beyond criticism.

This exhibition presents another vision, an everyday view rarely seen in the UK. It shows people like us – young and old, working and relaxing in communities that are urban and rural, modern and traditional.

Photographer Alejandro Gortazar has produced 50 images to 'celebrate the country, its achievements and the lives of its people'. As Cuban ambassador René Juan Mujica Cantelar said as he opened the exhibition in London last month, 'These photographs offer the chance to see behind the blockade, the shortages and the hostility from the US. The revolution,' he says, 'is a personal thing'.

PEOPLE LIKE US

Cubans are not bizarre beings. They are people like us, and in many ways they have made advances that we can only envy – like the fact that all health care, including dentistry, is free.

Cuban life expectancy is now 78 compared with 58 before the 1959 revolution.

There is certainly nothing 'backward' about Cuban literacy rates – which are among the

highest in the world. And their education levels are much the same as ours – except they too are provided free, and that includes pre-school, university and adult education.

Cuban women are treated with more equality than most places on earth. The country's MPs are 42.3% women who also make up 62% of university students and 66% of professionals, including 52% of Cuban doctors.

A SNAPSHOT OF A SOCIETY

These are some of the achievements of the past 50 years, but Alejandro's photographs help us to get a much clearer picture of ordinary Cuban life.

The exhibition is part of the Cuba50 initiative, organised by the Cuba Solidarity Campaign. CSC Director Rob Miller says, 'Cuba50 aims to celebrate Cuba's achievements over the last 50 years and promote Cuban culture in the UK. We are committed to campaigning against the US blockade and defending the Cuban people's right to determine their own future, free from foreign interference.

'But, like the Cubans you see in these photographs, we also like enjoying ourselves! I always say to anyone who has prejudices against the island that the best thing to do is visit it. I urge everyone to go – it's a marvellous place. And for those who can't at the moment – enjoy these pictures as a taster!'



Pioneros (Pioneers) – schoolchildren in Cuba don't get there in Range Rovers – but they get there in time all the same!
Pictures: Alejandro Gortazar



La arrancada (The start) – cycling, and most sports, form an important part of Cuban life



Los arrozales (Rice fields) – a beautiful picture of the demanding task of rice planting



La Comparsa – Cubans enjoying the carnival of comparsa music and dance groups which originate from slavery times in Cuba.

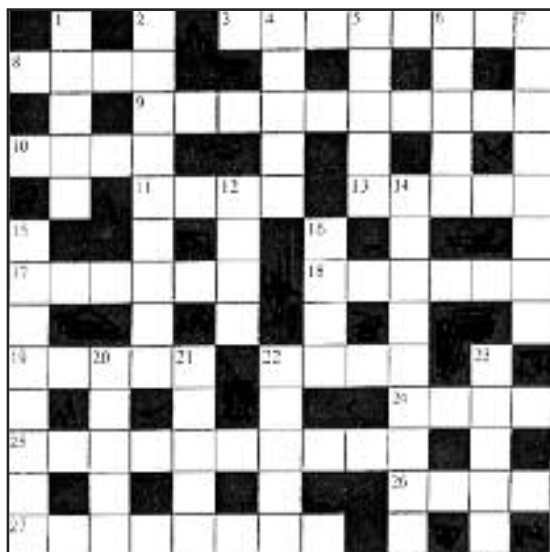


Bailando en la playa (Dancing on the beach) – there are annual dancing competitions on beaches to the East of Havana

Cuba50.org

● The 50-photo exhibition 'Celebrating Cuba – 50 Years of Revolution' is available on tour around the UK throughout this year. If you would like it to be shown at your venue or by your union branch please get in touch with the Cuba Solidarity Campaign. Contact details can be found at www.cuba-solidarity.org.uk or you can email or phone the office on office@cuba-solidarity.org.uk or 020 8800 0155

Prize Crossword No. 48 set by TLC



Solution to Crossword No 47 which appeared in the March edition of the ASLEF Journal. Congratulations to **Kerry Holton** from **Alton, Hants**

CLUES ACROSS

- 3 Watery home of a 'mythical' Scottish monster (4,4)
 8 Girl's name (4)
 9 Royal London Borough (10)
 10 Painful eye affliction (4)
 11 Intentions (4)
 13 ----- and Grab (5)
 17 Capital of Turkey (6)
 18 (See 1 Down) (6)
 19 She usually works in a Hospital (5)
 22 City in Yemen (4)
 24 Well ventilated (4)
 25 Working after dark (5,5)
 26 Electro-plated-nickel-silver, initially(4)

27 Astonish, startle! (8)

CLUES DOWN

- 1 (and 18 Across) General Secretary of ASLEF (5)
 2 Cooked food to be eaten elsewhere (9)
 4 Water found in the desert (5)
 5 Many of these make light work! (5)
 6 Additional (5)
 7 Lack of this is apparent in Winter (8)
 12 Lunch, dinner or tea (4)
 14 Food soaked overnight in seasoning or wine (9)
 15 Wages, income (8)
 16 ---- Blyton, children'

- author (4)
 20 Man's name (5)
 21 Go in (5)
 22 ---- and pains (5)
 23 Borough of London with an impressive Shopping Centre (5)



MARKS & SPENCER

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ACROSS 1 Old Street 8 Restaurant Car 11 Alec 12 Habit 13 Cede 16 Leisure 17 Geology 18 Bentine 20 Conceal 21 Roll 22 Apart 23 ISBN 26 Pneumatic tyre 27 Signalman

DOWN 2 Late 3 Sausage 4 Reading 5 Eats 6 Venetian Blind 7 Made To Measure 9 Early Bird 10 Recycling 14 Tulip 15 Round 19 Explain 20 Cordial 24 Judi 25 Etna

Thanks for all your responses to the 47th ASLEF crossword in the March edition. If you complete this month's crossword please send the solution to the Editor, ASLEF Journal, 9 Arkwright Road, London NW3 6AB by the 14th of the issue month.

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EMERGENCIES If you are an ASLEF member who is arrested or being interviewed by the police and need legal assistance – day or night – you can call the members' Emergency Hotline on 0800 587 7530.

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